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Back to the Sea



fantasy

mermaid

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Chapter 1 by nabeela

My name is Versailles.

I have always been afraid of the ocean. The way the waves rise and fall, slapping the rocks that sit close to the shore; the unknown murky depths that will never be explored due to the crushing pressure that could collapse any man's lungs; the way the salty sea brine, no matter how still it may be, could, in a large tidal wave, finally devour cities whole, leaving nothing but dead bodies and flooded homes to be seen, all life washed away with the water of the ocean.

But it draws me back to it every time.

Chapter 2 by -



The cawing of sea gulls upon the rocky coast. The slashing of fish tails flipping above the water's surface. And the warmth of the sun's golden rays beaming down on my uplifted face.

I breathed in the salty sea air, soaking in the oceanic atmosphere.

Slowly, my legs began to transform. They wriggled and writhed beneath the cold water. I could feel the scaly metallic slim climbing up my legs and tingling my spine. I opened my eyes and let my hand run down the slippery tail. This miracle never ceased to amaze me.

A smiled happily as I unburdened myself, out of the water, which carried it onto the sandy shore. Then I leaped up and plunged into the shimmering sea.

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Chapter 3 by Blank



The water was cold and nostalgic, reminded me of old times when wasn't afraid of the ocean. I remembered how I used to dance with the water and the fish. I picked coral and other beautiful things that I saw, but anything after that is a blur I can't seem to remember any thing but a faint figure of a male with a tail. I used to think the ocean was beautiful but now it is a dark, scary, and a trash can to the humans. Where did my feelings of joy and happiness for the sea go....

Chapter 4 by Sara_Of_Music



I headed to the famed mercity of Atlantis. Made by the humans, but flooded over. No merfolk resided here. When I saw it, it reminded me of *the terror*. What happened was told to be unspeakable. I wasn't there when it happened, but of the city swimming with thousands of merfolk, only one lived to tell the tale. I remember her, rushing to the queen of our city, Queen Arronailia, to tell her what happened. The girl was young, looking to be about 7 years old. She was terrified. Queen Arronailia had ordered her to tell no one.

The city used to be so pretty! Oh I loved to visit! My aunt Star used to live here. She would always tell me "Oh Versailles, look at the vast ocean. One day, we will be just as mysterious and wondrous!" I'd like to think that she made it there, but that's all part of the mystery.

I found myself nearing the center of the city. It's beauty was tainted by the lack of up keep required to keep it sparkling as it used too. I sat on one of the benches, curling my tail so that I covered the entire thing. That's when I saw a shadowy figure watching me. I recognized it from my memory. It was that male with a tail! I must know who he is, and see if he remembered the rest of my memory. Or, what if he was in some way responsible for *the terror* that destroyed the civilization of Atlantis?!

Chapter 5 by Windlion



"Welcome, fair one." His voice, so compelling. Some magic? I thought, and instinctively strengthened my wards.

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"I -- I thank you, good mage Elenor ..." My words sound to me like a child, speaking to one many ages older. Perhaps he is ... yes, I think, as my sight clears, many ages. As many as this great lost city?

"Come, let me offer you a tour. How is Star doing these days? It has -- it has been a long, long time since she and I had a conversation." His eyes darkened, his brow furrowed. "Possibly, that is my fault."

"Good mage ... " I should say no. Mermen, Aunt Star, often said, only want one thing from mermaids, and it isn't conversation about ruined buildings. Still. I'm not a child any more.

"Good mage, I would welcome you as a guide. I -- these towers, these avenues call to me ... they speak of the lost power of our people."

"Not lost, no," he replied. "Simply mislaid."

Is he seeking the Ente Song as well? I quelled my thought, hoping that he would not catch my mind's surge of emotion. Aunt Star had cautioned me against telling anyone of her quest.

No. My quest, now.

He was looking at me. Somehow, I knew that he knew, and felt embarrassed, exposed.

His words were a balm, though, an assurance of friendship. "Then, follow! We will go first to the Weir."

The Weir! Visions of that fabled collection of the sea's bounty dispelled any trace of caution from my head. I was hungry, after all, and the bounty of fish collected in its spell-built maze was legend.

So I followed. And yes, I also paid attention to his physique as we swam. Nice architecture.

Chapter 6 by Jarrett Glickson



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He had an incredible stroke as gliding, he cut through the water with the finesse of a swordfish splitting through the open ocean.

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Chapter 7 by Windlion



How strange to swim down an avenue between high towers and grand colonnades -- and the bright colors, like a tropical reef! "This is beautiful!" I sang to my guide.

"So it is," he replied, following the same musical pattern I used. "Before the walls began to die, the entire city was like this."

"Oh, a sadness," I sang back to him. "Will you tell me more?"

"Another time. Before us, the Weir."

What a creation by the architects of old! So this is how they kept the merfolk of Atlantis fed. The great arena encompassed an whirlpool, with a central drain; the drain and the sides were block with a thin, strong web.

And caught in the Weir -- fish, by the hundreds! So many, all the ones I knew and many I did not.

"So, would you like to take a meal here?"

"I would. Am I permitted, good mage?"

"Certainly. These days there are so few of us feeding here, I have to release them all every day. Do you see the rails along the bottom and up the sides? Those allow you to pull free of the whirlpool's grasp when you have caught your prey. Perhaps you might try a smaller catch the first time, the current is deceptively strong."

"I thank you. May I go first?"

"Please do. I have already eaten."

I swam into the Weir's entrance -- what a thought, many of my kind entering here, harvesting their meals together! The tuna and groupers were tempting, as were the ones I did not know --

but prudence and the awareness that Elenor was watching guided me to a young red snapper.

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Singing a prayer of thanks, I turned to the young fish. "Thank you for this meal," I said. "It is a delight to me. I pushed my jaws forward and took it in. The taste was amazing, the

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best I have ever enjoyed -- I turned downward, found the handrails, and pulled myself back out of the Weir.

If my mouth had not been full of delicious snapper, I would have been singing a mating song, out of sheer joy!

Ah, but I could tell that Elenor knew.

Chapter 8 by Windlion



"You remind me so much of Star!" Elenor's voice carried the subtones of joyful times long past. "How does she fare?"

"Ah ... lord mage, a sorrow ... she swims a different ocean now."

His long body froze for a second, and then shuddered. "Seeing you here, I had feared that was so. I ... am ... I despair."

"She sent me here to fulfill a quest, that -- "

"Yes. The Ente. I should have known that was so, when I saw who you were. It is my quest also." He spun slowly, searching the great towers and avenues of Atlantis. "It was our quest. It is here, somewhere. I know it. But we need more eyes to find it."

"Are there more of us, then?"

"A few. Almost all of them find the city too full of old ghosts like me that quell the beating of their young hearts. You are different in that regard, Versailles."

"I would like to meet with them, sing of my foolish fears and of the wonders I have found here. May I have your permission -- friend Elenor?"

Hearing the shift in my melody, he pushed a frown off his face with a pained grin. "Dear

Versailles -- " He paused.

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Great, just what I deserve for being a silly child! He said that to me that way. I feel like an idiot, he probably has a huge head. I'm sorry, I did not mean to presume -- " but he ignored my song and began his own.

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"Dear Versailles, please count me always, always as your friend, but -- there are many mermen among us far less weathered and worn who -- well, forgive an old salt's impropriety. If a younger merman had been present when you rose from the Weir, you would certainly have been singing that mating song that was in your heart with him. It woke many memories in mine."

"Oh ... but I meant it for you ..." Stupid! Did I just say that? Stupid!

"You do not need to berate yourself, child. You are very like your Aunt Star -- she and I were lovers for many centuries, and our song still lingers in my ears. But that was long ago." He spun suddenly and dove. "Follow!" he called, and I did.

Deep we swam, past marvels of art and function, then in between great columns to an atrium filled with light from the surface above. This must be the Council Room, I thought, where they struggled against the terror to the end? Before I could ask Elenor, though, he stopped before an ornate dais in the center and turned to face me.

"Versailles, I have a proposal that may give you a song of your own," he chanted in ritual tones. "Are you are willing to stay in Atlantis for a while?"

"To stay here? By, by myself? What about the terror that --"

"There was no terror. There was only fear, fear of seaquakes, fear of the monsters of the deep, fear of the humans, fear of the unknown. It grew in everyone's hearts until they could not see clearly. They rushed away seeking safety, and found it -- in their lonely deaths."

He was quiet for a while, then looked up and smiled. "It would not be my intent that you live here alone, though it has sadly been my fate until now. If the seas carry news of a beautiful maid proclaimed Magister Civitatis Atlantis -- the master of the city, living in this great metropolis? I hope others of her generation, mermen and mermaids alike, will overcome their fears and flock to her call." He paused, then added with tragic subnotes, "They have ignored mine."

Magister? Him? Me? To live here in the depths of the sea alone, bound to the city by oath, likely for the rest of my life?

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Now I understood why I had been chosen.

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It swallows us and draws us down.

We yield to it, we fall in love with it.
And we never return.

Yes.

"My lord Elenor -- Magister Elenor -- if it is your will that I make oath with the Great City Atlantis to be its master and protector -- I accept. I accept without reservation, to serve as long as I will live." My voice choked with emotion, I stopped and calmed myself. What else should I say?

I know.

"And one day, my lord, I will find the Ente, and will bring it to you, so that perhaps we can sing it together? Even if it happens to be a mating song."

Our smiles lit up the city walls, and the music rang in the towers like bells.

the end

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